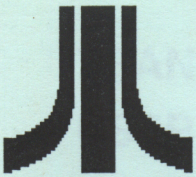

TRANSDISK IV

Version 4.2

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TRANSDISK IV
USER INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

Transdisk is a powerful utility designed specifically to transfer commercial games or other 'autoboot' cassette software to disk for faster and more reliable loading. The program transfers the software to a menu disk which, in turn, allows you to load and run the disk version of a cassette program with a single keypress. Transdisk supports single density, enhanced 1050 density and even true double density so you can compact lots of cassette programs on to each of your disks.

You should find Transdisk very easy to use, but please read the following instructions before attempting to use the program.

LOADING TRANSDISK

LOADING TRANSDISK

i) Remove ALL cartridges from your Atari computer and ensure the power is off
ii) Switch on your disk drive and then insert the Transdisk program disk supplied
iii) Wait for the red 'busy' light to go out on the disk drive then switch on your computer
iv) Transdisk should now load and run automatically

After a second or two you should see a 'Transdisk' loading message, and then after approximately 20 seconds a menu of options will appear on the screen of your TV or monitor. To carry out any of the operations on this menu, press the key on the computer keyboard that matches the first letter of the menu item. From this point you will find that Transdisk is very easy to use. On-screen prompts are given for you to follow and if an error should occur at any time it is also explained on the screen in full English.

USING TRANSDISK

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM

Before going any further make sure you have a blank disk ready and also some software on cassette that you wish to transfer to disk. Assuming you have loaded Transdisk as explained above, the menu screen should be displayed like this:

<1>Index of drive 1 files
<2>Index of drive 2 files
<I>nitialise disk
<S>tandard autoboot tape read
<N>on-standard autoboot tape read
<W>rite new disk file
<A>ppend to disk file
<D>elete disk file

Your choice?

OBTAINING A DISK DIRECTORY

THE MENU ITEMS

The Menu choices are as follows:

<1> INDEX OF DRIVE 1 FILES
<2> INDEX OF DRIVE 2 FILES

Select either of these menu items when you need to establish what files are present on a particular disk. After selection the screen will clear and display the files on the disk currently in the drive, together with the amount of space taken up by each file, in disk sectors. The number of free disk sectors available on the disk will also be displayed.

Try typing '1' on the keyboard now with the Transdisk program disk still in the disk drive. You should see the following index of files:

TransdiskIV 707 000 FREE SECTORS
Press SPACE to continue

Press the SPACE BAR to return to the main menu screen. As you can see there is no free space on the Transdisk master disk so a new blank disk must be prepared to hold your cassette programs. This is achieved with the <I>nitialise disk item.

The second menu item '<2> INDEX OF DRIVE 2 FILES', simply allows a listing of the files on a second disk drive, if you have one.

<I>NITIALISE DISK

PREPARING A DISK

Before Transdisk can transfer any cassette software to a new disk, that disk must first be initialised by selecting this item on the menu. Transdisk will format the blank disk then write a special menu to the disk that allows it to accept files transferred from cassette.

Make sure you have your blank disk ready, then select this menu item by hitting 'I' on the computer keyboard. A text message should appear at the bottom of the screen, like this:

Initialise disk number <1> or <2>?

If you only have one disk drive type '1' or if you have two disk drives and it is more convenient to initialise disk drive number two, type '2'.

After your selection, the screen will clear and another message will appear. If you have a standard 800XL computer the message will look like this:

<1> XTMENU.SYS
<2> XLMENU.SYS
Which menu?

On a 130XE computer or memory expanded 800XL the message will look like this:

<1> XTMENU.SYS
<2> XEMENU.SYS
Which menu?

As you can see you have a choice of two menus that you can place on your initialised disks. If you are transferring cassettes to disk that require less than 48K of memory, you will need the 'XTMENU.SYS' menu which is the same for both the XL and XE computers. However, for cassette programs that require 64K of memory you will need to select the 'XLMENU.SYS' menu for the 800XL computer or the 'XEMENU.SYS' menu for the 130XE.

Most cassette games will load and run from the 'XTMENU.SYS' menu, in fact earlier versions of Transdisk only had this menu. If you have problems loading and running software from this menu you should try the 'XLMENU.SYS' or the 'XEMENU.SYS' menu.

When you have decided upon a menu, type <1> or <2> on the

computer keyboard to select it and the following prompt will appear:

INSERT Transdisk in drive 1
Press START when ready

If you have selected to initialise drive two, the following message will also appear:

INSERT blank disk in drive 2

Insert the Transdisk program disk into your disk drive, if it is not already there, then press the START key. Transdisk will attempt to read some data of this disk, and afterwards prompt you as follows:

INSERT blank disk in drive 1
Press START when ready

Or, if you are initialising disk 2 then the blank disk in this drive will be formatted and written to immediately. If you only have one drive, remove the Transdisk disk and insert a blank disk, then press START.

Make sure the blank disk you are writing to has no data on it you wish to keep as it will be erased completely!

When Transdisk has finished, the menu program you selected will be present on the initialised disk (you can check with the index of drive files function if you like to make sure that it is there) and the following prompt then appears:

Complete. Press SPACE to continue

Hit the space bar to return to the main menu and that's it, you have a disk ready to accept cassette files. It would be a good idea to label this disk with the menu name now and remember that when this disk becomes full you will need to prepare another blank disk by selecting the item <I>nitialise disk again.

CHOOSING THE TYPE OF LOAD

<S>TANDARD AUTOBOOT TAPE READ
<N>ON STANDARD AUTOBOOT TAPE READ

Together these two menu items allow you to load virtually any type of cassette program into the computer's memory. The <S>tandard auto-boot option is used to read a single or multi-stage 'boot' cassette, a BASIC 'CLOAD' type cassette or a BASIC 'CLOAD' cassette with a separate machine code file. The <N>on-standard boot option is only

used to read a 'boot' tape that cannot be read with the <S>tandard option.

It is a good idea to use the <S>tandard autoboot option first to read a cassette and if this is unsuccessful move on to the <N>on-standard option.

SELECTING LOAD STAGES

After selecting the <S>tandard option the screen changes to another menu where you are given the chance to select either a single or multi-stage format and, if multi-stage, the number of stages (2 to 9). Multi-stage simply means more than one cassette file, for example many games start loading from tape then stop, maybe put a loading title up and/or sound a loud beep, then start loading a second file thus having two stages of loading. This may be repeated several times adding further stages. It is up to you to determine the number of stages on a particular tape before loading it into Transdisk.

NON STANDARD FORMATS

If the <S>tandard autoboot option is unsuccessful at loading a particular tape into Transdisk because it keeps generating errors, then the tape is probably recorded in a format that is not the same as the Atari standard. These type of tapes usually start off loading normally then switch to long, short or a combination of various sized records. The size of the bleeps during loading may change or you may only be able to hear a high pitched tone or no sound at all while this type of tape loads. If the tape you wish to transfer to disk seems to be like this and you cannot read it with the <S>tandard option, then you will need to select the <N>on-standard option to read it into Transdisk.

SELECTING PARAMETERS

The <N>on-standard option also displays another menu, but with some different parameters. For the most part you will never need to change these parameters as they are sufficient for loading all but the most tricky cassettes, however the following text explains what they mean should you need to use them.

'Gaps Between Stages' means the time interval between when the regular records stop and the non-standard records start. A short gap here means hardly no time interval at all, while a long gap would mean something approaching the gap on a regular 'autoboot' cassette which is quite long.

'Gaps Between Records' refers to the gaps between the non-standard records only. Again a short gap here would mean virtually no time at all, while a long gap would mean over a couple of seconds.

The last parameter is Speed Bytes. This parameter is used by Transdisk to calculate the speed (baud rate) of the incoming cassette data.

Two speed bytes is usually enough but you can specify as many as eight. This may be necessary on tapes with very long records. Transdisk needs more speed bytes to calculate an adequate, average speed for the incoming data. You can also specify zero speed bytes in which case Transdisk uses the baud rate calculated before the non-standard records began. This is also useful for reading cassettes with very long data records.

It must be stressed that you may never need to use these parameters, for example the non-standard tapes CANYON CLIMBER, ENCOUNTER, MERCENARY can all be loaded with the default parameters.

LOADING THE TAPE

After selecting either standard or non-standard autoboot tape read, you are asked to insert the tape and then the data requested is loaded into memory by Transdisk. At the end of a non-standard tape read, Transdisk may seem to ignore the end of the recording on the tape. This is normal and after a short while the following prompt will appear to indicate the operation is complete:

Complete. Press SPACE to continue

Hit the space bar to return to the main menu where you will be able to save the data loaded with the next menu option, <W>rite new disk file.

SAVING TO DISK

<W>RITE NEW DISK FILE

This item is used to save to disk any tape data loaded by options <S> and <N>. If you select this item and you have not loaded any data, the following message will be displayed:

No file currently in memory!

otherwise you will be prompted for a disk filename, like this:

Enter disk filename?

Use the computer keyboard to enter a standard Atari DOS type filename, that is up to eight alphabetical or numerical characters followed by a three character extender. If you are unfamiliar with entering disk filenames you should consult your DOS manual.

If you have two disk drives you can save data to drive two by adding the prefix 'D2:' to your filenames.

USING THE CORRECT EXTENDERS

Now the important bit. You must give the filename extender .OBJ for cassettes that were of the 'boot' type, i.e. tapes that are normally loaded by holding down OPTION and START or just START when switching on your computer. If the tape was a BASIC CLOAD type program then the extender must be .BOB. Failure to use the correct extender will result in the file not showing up on the menu disk or not loading properly.

As an example, suppose you have a fruit machine game you have loaded into Transdisk, and you want to call it 'JACKPOT'. Let's say it is a 'boot' game so it must have the extender '.OBJ'. This is what you would need to enter on the keyboard, after the filename prompt:

JACKPOT.OBJ

And, of course, you need to press RETURN after typing the name, but before doing this always make sure that you have a menu disk in your disk drive, that is the menu disk that was prepared using the <I>nitialise disk item. If you attempt to save a file to an uninitialised disk you will see the following error message:

Not an X series menu disk!

MULTIPLE COPIES

If the disk is initialised, the file will be saved to that disk. You can select the item <W>rite disk file as many times as you like if you wish to make another disk copy of the tape you have loaded into Transdisk. You can also select the <W>rite option to save the data in memory if an error occurs during cassette loading. Some tapes have garbage at the end of the tape to force errors, however when an error is reported by Transdisk you can still <W>rite to disk the data that was loaded before the error occurred.

END OF TAPE ERRORS

To distinguish between errors that might be genuine and those that could mark the end of the tape recording it is a good idea to make a note of the tape counter value when you have loaded a piece of software from cassette normally, that is if you were actually playing the game or whatever. Then when you load the tape from Transdisk and an error is reported you can compare the tape counter value with the one you made a note of, thus determining whether all the tape data has been loaded. You can also terminate non-standard tape input with the, BREAK key, if you know that the whole cassette has loaded into Transdisk, but the program appears to be still searching for more data.

HANDLING EXTRA DATA

<A>PPEND TO DISK FILE

When you become confident using the Transdisk system you will no doubt want to use this menu item. The <A>ppend function is included because some cassettes have additional data files that are loaded after the main program. These could be located on the flip side of the tape so, obviously, Transdisk cannot load them with the main program. The idea is to load the data files separately then join them on to the main program with the <A>ppend command.

HANDLING VERY LONG PROGRAMS

This item is also useful for standard 800XL computer owners who cannot load a cassette in one whole chunk because there isn't enough memory (this would not be a problem for 130XE or expanded 800XL owners because Transdisk will automatically use the extra memory available). If this problem does occur you can load a multi-stage tape in separate chunks then join them up on the menu disk.

Here is an example which should make it clear:

Consider the game NINJA by MASTERTRONIC which is probably one of the longest cassettes we have come across. The game is a three stage 'boot' tape but if you select <S>tandard autoboot tape read and a three stage load the tape will load into an 800XL computer before giving the following error message:

Insufficient memory !

Specifically this occurs during the third stage. The solution is to load the first TWO stages with <S>tandard tape read, two stage load, and when this is complete <W>rite it to disk. Now select a <S>tandard tape read again but this time with a one stage load i.e. load the third, and final, stage into the computer (you should leave the cassette in position after the first two-stage load). This last stage will load into the computer with no memory difficulties which means you can select the <A>ppend option. You will be asked to enter the name of the disk file you wish to append the memory to, like so:

Enter filename?

In our example, suppose we called the first part of the file NINJA.OBJ when it was <W>ritten to disk, then this is the filename we need to enter at the above prompt, *not a new one*, since we are adding data to the old file. All being well the data in memory will be joined on to the end of the existing disk file overcoming the memory limitations of the computer. You can of course do this as many times as disk space will allow. For example, you could also transfer NINJA by loading the first

stage and <W>riting it to disk , then load and <A>ppend the second stage, and finally load and <A>ppend the third stage.

STRIPPING THE BOOT HEADER

NOTE: For more advanced or seasoned Transdisk users you might like to know that you can load a non-standard section of tape without the usual 'boot' tape header, i.e. the non-standard records only, by holding down SHIFT when pressing START at the Non-standard selection menu. This is useful for loading sections of tape data for appending to.

<D>elete DISK FILE

DELETING UNWANTED FILES

Sooner or later you may find that you wish to delete a file from the menu disk. To do this just select this item from the menu by pressing 'D' on the computer keyboard. The following prompt will appear:

Enter filename?

Use the computer keyboard to type the filename of the file you wish to erase. The index of disk files function is useful here if you cannot remember the filename. Before pressing RETURN to enter the file-name, make sure you really want to delete the file in question as there is no way to recover a lost file with Transdisk.

LOADING THE DISK VERSIONS

RUNNING YOUR TRANSDISK GAMES

When you have an initialised disk with a menu plus any number of cassette programs in their new disk format you can load and run the disk versions by following this procedure:

i) Remove ALL cartridges from your computer and ensure the power is off
ii) Switch on your disk drive and insert the menu disk
iii) Wait for the red 'busy' light to go out on the disk drive then switch on your computer holding the OPTION key if neces-sary. See note below*
iv) The menu program should load and run automatically and display the files on the disk
v) Load and run any file by typing the key that matches the letter to the left of the file

* If BASIC is not required by any of the programs you are going to load from the menu, you should hold down OPTION while switching on your computer. Most machine code files do not need BASIC to run. If you are loading '.BOB' files then leave BASIC in!

A GUIDE TO GAMES THAT CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO DISK WITH TRANSDISK IV

On the opposite page is a selection of games that have been successfully transferred using TRANSDISK IV. It is by no means complete and further games will be added to this list as notified by registered users of Transdisk.

The information regarding these games was provided by Transdisk user M.D. Levers to whom our thanks are extended.

Other games that have been transferred but for which the above information is not yet available include LEADERBOARD, MERCENARY, SPEED ACE, WARHAWK, DROPZONE, INTERNATIONAL KARATE, BALLBLAZER, SPINDIZZY, SPITFIRE ACE, RESCUE ON FRACTULUS, HARDBALL, INVASION, POLE POSITION, BMX SIMULATOR, TRANSMUTER, CRUMBLES CRISIS, UNIVERSAL HERO and many, many more.

NOTE: When transferring a tape using (N)on Standard you do not need to use stages. Just press 'N' then START. Press play on the tape deck and then RETURN. When the tape is finished wait about 30 seconds and 'Complete' should show up. If it does not press BREAK, ignore the error, and (W)rite the file to disk.

GAME	No. of Stages	800XL/ 65XE Menu	130XE Menu	Standard/ Non-Standard	Sectors	Notes
180	3	XL	XE	S	182	2
ALLEY CAT		XL	XE	N	126	
BLUE MAX		XT	XT	N	098	
BRUCE LEE	4	XL	XE	S	135	
CENTIPEDE	2	XT	XT	S	069	
CHUCKIE EGG	1	XL	XE	S	084	
CRACK UP		XL	XE	N	075	
DECATHLON	2	XL	XE	S	073	
DIMENSION X		XL	XE	N	079	
ENCOUNTER		XT	XT	N	114	
F15 STRIKE EAGLE	2	XL	XE	S	144	
FORBIDDEN FOREST		XT	XT	N	054	
GHOST CHASER	2	XL	XE	S	170	
GUNFIGHTER	4	XT	XT	S	151	3
HENRY'S HOUSE	2	XT	XT	S	160	1
JAVA JIM		XL	XE	N	063	
L.A. SWAT	1	XT	XT	S	102	
LASER HAWK	2	XL	XE	S	090	
MILKRACE	2	XT	XT	S	109	
MOUNTAIN BIKE SIM.	2	XT	XT	S	175	
MR DO	5	XL	XE	S	195	4
MR ROBOT	2	XT	XT	S	093	
NINJA	3	XL	XE	S	196	2
NINJA MASTER	2	XL	XE	S	120	
NUCLEAR NICK	2	XL	XE	S	154	
O'RILEY'S MINE		XT	XT	N	046	
QUASIMODO	3	XL	XE	S	120	
SHAMUS		XL	XE	N	067	
SLINKEY	1	XL	XE	S	054	
STRATOSPHERE		XT	XT	N	057	
SUPER ZAXXON	2	XL	XE	S	085	
THRUST	1	XT	XT	S	074	
TIGER ATTACK	4	XT	XT	S	143	
UP N DOWN		XL	XE	N	076	
VEGAS	3	XL	XE	S	187	2
VEGAS JACKPOT		XL	XE	N	069	
WHIRLYNURD	2	XL	XE	S	120	
ZAXXON	4	XT	XT	S	078	

NOTES: 1 - Load 1 stage and Append the other - 2 - Load 2 stages and Append the other - 3 - Load 2 stages and Append the other 2 - 4 - Load 3 stages and append the other 2

NOTES